IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 5 – 8, 15 and 20.

Please amend the claims to read as indicated herein.

1. (currently amended) A ~~device for retrieving stored data~~ system comprising:
~~means for assigning at least one prioritized attribute to the data prior to storage; and~~
~~means for retrieving said stored data, wherein said stored data is retrieved in an~~
~~order determined by the priority of said at least one prioritized attribute~~
~~assigned to said stored data~~
a module that embeds a value for an attribute into a key to data; and
a module that creates an index of said data and associates said data with said key.

2. (currently amended) The ~~device~~ system of claim 1, wherein said ~~stored data~~ key
comprises an identifier, and said ~~at least one prioritized attribute~~ value is encoded into
said identifier.

3. (currently amended) The ~~device~~ system of claim 1, wherein said ~~stored~~ data
comprises a plurality of digital documents.

4. (currently amended) The ~~device~~ system of claim 1, wherein said ~~stored~~ data is
stored in a database.

5 – 8. (canceled)

9. (currently amended) A method ~~for retrieving stored data~~ comprising:
~~assigning at least one prioritized attribute to the data prior to storage; and~~
~~retrieving said stored data in an order determined by the priority of said at least one~~
~~prioritized attribute assigned to said stored data~~
embedding a value for an attribute into a key to data;

8

creating an index of said data; and

associating said data with said key.

10. (currently amended) The method of claim 9, wherein said ~~stored~~ data comprises an identifier, and said ~~at least one prioritized attribute~~ value is encoded into said identifier.

11. (currently amended) The method of claim 9, wherein said ~~stored~~ data comprises a plurality of digital documents.

12. (currently amended) The method of claim 9, further comprising storing said ~~stored~~ data in a database.

13. (currently amended) The method of claim 9, wherein said ~~stored~~ data is distributed over a plurality of network nodes.

14. (currently amended) The method of claim 13, wherein ~~assigning at least one prioritized attribute~~ said embedding is performed over ~~a~~ said plurality of network nodes.

15. (canceled)

16. (currently amended) A software program, stored on a data carrier, for executing a method ~~for retrieving stored data,~~ when run on a data processing system, said method comprising:

    ~~assigning at least one prioritized attribute to the data prior to storage; and~~

    ~~retrieving said stored data in an order determined by the priority of said at least one~~

        ~~prioritized attribute assigned to said stored data~~

    embedding a value for an attribute into a key to data;

    creating an index of said data; and

    associating said data with said key.

17. (currently amended) The software program of claim 16, wherein said stored data comprises an identifier, and said at least one prioritized attribute value is encoded into said identifier.

18. (currently amended) The software program of claim 16, wherein said stored data is distributed over a plurality of network nodes.

19. (currently amended) The software program of claim 18, wherein assigning at least one prioritized attribute said embedding is performed over a said plurality of network nodes.

20. (canceled)

Please add the following claims, newly numbered as claims 21 - 32

21. (new) The system of claim 1,
wherein said key is a first key and said value is a first value, and
wherein said system further comprises:
  a module that searches said index and obtains a list that includes said first key
      and a second key, wherein said second key has a second value
      embedded therein for said attribute; and
  a module that sorts said list in an order determined by said first value and said
      second value.

22. (new) The system of claim 21, wherein said module that embeds said value and said module that searches said index are connected by a network having a plurality of nodes.

23. (new) The system of claim 22, wherein said data is distributed over said plurality of nodes.

24. (new) The system of claim 22, wherein said module that embeds said value is distributed over said plurality of nodes.

25. (new) The system of claim 22, wherein the module that searches said index is distributed over said plurality of nodes.

26. (new) The method of claim 9,

wherein said key is a first key and said value is a first value, and

wherein said method further comprises:

    searching said index;

    obtaining a list that includes said first key and a second key, wherein said
        second key has a second value embedded therein for said attribute; and

    sorting said list in an order determined by said first value and said second
        value.

27. (new) The method of claim 26,

wherein said data is distributed over a plurality of network nodes; and

wherein said searching is performed over said plurality of network nodes.

28. (new) The software program of claim 16,

wherein said key is a first key and said value is a first value, and

wherein said method further comprises:

    searching said index;

    obtaining a list that includes said first key and a second key, wherein said
        second key has a second value embedded therein for said attribute; and

    sorting said list in an order determined by said first value and said second
        value.

29. (new) The software program of claim 28,

wherein said data is distributed over a plurality of network nodes, and

wherein said searching is performed over said plurality of network nodes.

11

30. (new) A system comprising:

a module that (A) searches an index of data, wherein said data includes (i) a first
      item of data associated with a first key having embedded therein a first value
      for an attribute, and (ii) a second item of data associated with a second key
      having embedded therein a second value for said attribute, and (B) obtains a
      list that includes said first key and said second key; and

a module that sorts said list in an order determined by said first value and said
      second value.

31. (new) A method comprising:

searching an index of data, wherein said data includes (i) a first item of data
      associated with a first key having embedded therein a first value for an
      attribute, and (ii) a second item of data associated with a second key having
      embedded therein a second value for said attribute;

obtaining a list that includes said first key and said second key; and

sorting said list in an order determined by said first value and said second value.

32. (new) A software program, stored on a data carrier, for executing a method
when run on a data processing system, said method comprising:

searching an index of data, wherein said data includes (i) a first item of data
      associated with a first key having embedded therein a first value for an
      attribute, and (ii) a second item of data associated with a second key having
      embedded therein a second value for said attribute;

obtaining a list that includes said first key and said second key; and

sorting said list in an order determined by said first value and said second value.